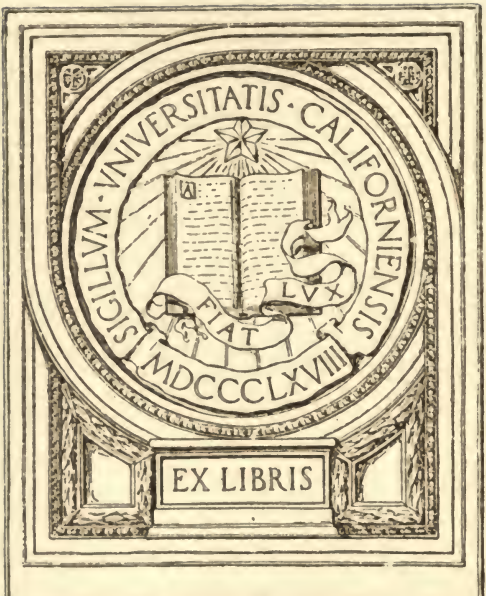
E
664
H8G2


SIGILLVM · VNIVERSITATIS · CALIFORNIENSIS
LVX
FIAT
MDCCCLXVIII
EX LIBRIS

Charles Evans Hughes

The Man

Side-Lights Upon the Personality
of the Former Governor
of New York

By John Palmer Gavit

Reprinted from
The New York Evening Post
June 10th, 1916

Ten Cents Per Copy
(Special Rates in Quantities)

New York
The Nation Press, Inc.
20 Vesey Street
1916

Charles Evans Hughes

The Man

Side-Lights Upon the Personality
of the Former Governor
of New York

By John Palmer Gavit

Reprinted from
The New York Evening Post
June 10th, 1916

Ten Cents Per Copy
(Special Rates in Quantities)

New York
The Nation Press, Inc.
20 Vesey Street
1916

E664
H86 2

Copyright 1916 by The New York Evening Post Co.

NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Printed by
The Nation Press, Inc.
20 Vesey Street,
New York

IT HAPPENS to have been my privilege—I count it one of the assets of my life—to see a good deal of Charles Evans Hughes during the four years of his service at Albany as Governor of the State of New York; to see him not only daily in official action at the Executive Chamber, but in his own home; to travel with him many hundreds of miles; to talk with him on subjects of many kinds; to swap stories with him—in short, to know the *man* behind the official.

The net impression that remains with me out of the memories of those stirring days is that of the most straightforward, intellectually honest, transparently sincere person I ever have known; at the same time one of the most companionable, most *human* men it has been my fortune to meet.

In a word, I think of Hughes, not as the ruthless investigator of gas and life-insurance abuses; not as the originator of the Public Service Commissions in New York; not as the defender of the Constitution in the matter of public gambling at race-tracks; not as the fighter for direct nominations; but as a *man*—phenomenally clear-headed, single-minded, and inconceivably industrious, absolutely fearless, to be sure; but humanly approachable and friendly, good natured, reasonable, jovial—and *on the level with his job.*

: : : : : :

ONE night we came down from the western part of the State, after a tour of the county fairs—during the memorable fight over the anti-gambling legislation it was. Through some failure of arrangements no reservation had been made on the east-bound sleeper. There were three of us: the Governor, Colonel Treadwell, his military secretary, and myself. There was but one berth.

No argument would induce the Governor to take that berth. Yes, he was the Governor; his rest was of public importance and all that—he knew, but it made no difference; we were travelling together, and we must share the inconveniences. So we rode together in the smoking-car practically all night.

339432

A smoking-car at night is not the most comfortable of places; this one happened to be full of laborers and redolent with many odors. The Governor's silk hat, on and off in the effort for physical comfort, came to look like a fur muff; but he was oblivious of that. We had a jolly time. The Governor is a capital story-teller, and his laugh—you can hear it a good distance—must have disturbed more than one sleeper in the crowded car.

: : : : : :

SOME of the stories he told that night were of his own experiences. One was of a time, early in his law practice, when Hughes went to the Far West as representative of a syndicate of bondholders which had undertaken to rescue a railroad in one of the Pacific Coast States from a chaos of insolvency. The measures proposed as a result of his report were misconstrued by the people of the locality most interested, and when Hughes went before the court where an aspect of the case was to be passed upon, an angry crowd of railroad men filled the courtroom and hissed him to the echo. Fearlessly he faced them, fearlessly he said his say, and when he finished he had the crowd with him.

On his way home by night in the midst of the excitement, it was necessary for him to stop at a junction hotel to wait several hours for his train. The hotel proprietor came to his room privately with the ominous news that the bar-room below was filled with cursing railroad men promising to do him harm.

"Come quietly out this way," said the hotel man, "and I will have you driven over to the neighboring town. I have a rig waiting at the back. These men need not know that you have been here."

"Where is this bar-room?" demanded Hughes.

He made the protesting landlord take him down there, walked into the midst of the ugly crowd, and—

"Good evening, gentlemen! Will you join me? What will you have?"

And there he stayed, till train-time, talking things over, man to man.

He told us that night of other experiences of a more intimate character, which I may not repeat here; then, with a shout of laughter, clapped his hand down on my knee with a resounding slap, and cried:

"And yet there are people who think I was born day-before-yesterday!"

: : : : : :

OF THE party of Civil War veterans—most of them generals—and State officers, that went to Gettysburg to dedicate the Greene monument on Culp's Hill, riding in the private car with Governor Hughes, several are dead now—among them General Fred Grant, General Alex Webb, General Sickles, Senator Raines. The rest of us will long remember an episode on the evening of our arrival in Gettysburg, when the special train lay in the railroad yards, surrounded by a curious crowd of townspeople.

As we sat about the table after dinner, Governor Hughes told us of the thrilling and wholly unauthorized ascent of the spire of Strassburg Cathedral by his son, Charles, Jr., then somewhere about eleven years old.

The car was brilliantly lighted, and the shades were up. It was dark outside. So intent was the Governor upon his story, so thrilled with the memory of that hair-raising climb, that he rose from the table and fairly danced about, gesturing excitedly as he told how "young Charley" had gone up ahead of him and was lost to sight; how the steps narrowed, with the chance of a plunge either inside or outside to the ground 600 feet below.

The multitude of gaping citizens of Gettysburg standing in the dark outside the car watched in amazement. They could not hear a sound. And the Chief Magistrate of the State of New York continued his antics, his hands clutching and circling above his head, as he told this group of listeners how he found the

youngster clinging, monkey-fashion, to the fragile stonework outside the pinnacle of the spire.

Then some one called the Governor's attention to the hitherto unnoticed throng outside. For a moment he was disconcerted, as he thought of the contortions with which he had illustrated his narrative, and how it must have looked to those who could see but could not hear a word. Then he joined in the shout of laughter, and said:

"That comes of drinking three cups of tea at dinner. I shall never again be able to tell that story without chills of the spine."

: : : : : :

ONE of the guides of Gettysburg—a man perhaps thirty-five years old—stood under the trees at the "Bloody Angle" where Pickett's charge was stopped, and told the story of the place—told it to Webb, who was wounded on that very spot, and to Sickles and McCook. After he had finished, Governor Hughes made a little speech, in the course of which he said:

"I know that many brave things were done on this field; but I think nothing ever done here equalled in cold nerve the act of this young man who has stood here to-day, describing the battle of Gettysburg to those old fellows who were in it!"

: : : : : :

IT WOULD require more space than is now at command to tell adequately of the visit of Governor Hughes, with his glittering staff in full uniform, to Fortress Monroe, on a day during the Jamestown Exposition.

In full panoply the score of valiant officers, in column of twos, marched in at one of the postern gates and were chased out by a sentry in the corridor; they marched out again and round by the main gate. There an armed guard, commanding a squad of prisoners cleaning the road, pointed them toward the post office. There was nobody at the office.

Nobody met them, nobody paid any attention to

them. They might have been Knights of Pythias, or visiting firemen from Painted Post. As they passed the parade-ground a football came within four inches of the Governor's head and landed bang on the solar plexus of the Adjutant-General of New York.

It was full twenty minutes before the post woke up to the fact that this was a visit of ceremony, a distinguished military occasion. There was panic in the fort. Such amends as were possible were hastily improvised. But from the point of view of military etiquette the thing was unpardonable. And General Grant, commanding the Department of the East, at whose personal invitation, as they supposed, the commander-in-chief of the military and naval forces of the State of New York and his staff were paying a visit of ceremony to the fort, was napping in his dressing-gown at the Hotel Chamberlain!

: : : : : :

OF COURSE it was all a misunderstanding; but if Washington ever had heard of it there would have been lively times for General Grant and the officers at the fort. I never saw a madder lot of men than the members of the Governor's staff. They were for doing dire things to avenge the "insult" to the dignity of the Empire State and its Chief Magistrate.

The Chief Magistrate himself was holding his sides when the two newspaper men, eye-witnesses of all this, came to his room in answer to his summons.

"Boys," he said, "couldn't you manage to forget what you saw this afternoon? General Grant did not understand that we were going to the fort to-day. I wouldn't have him embarrassed about this for anything in the world. I know it is the funniest thing one could imagine, and a peach of a newspaper story, but I would be immensely obliged if you'd simply forget it."

Only two newspaper men knew the story. We looked at each other, nodded, joined in the Governor's laughter, and proceeded to "forget it." It will do no harm to tell it now.

HUGHES has always deprecated the story that he was an infant prodigy. His parents did not encourage precocity.

"I was an omnivorous reader," he told me once, "and interested in everything that came along; my mind was clear and active, but it is not true that I found my recreation in Greek and Latin roots, or amused my childish hours with exercises in differential calculus!

"I did read practically all of Shakespeare's plays before I was eight years old; but I read them *for the story.*"

It was said at Brown University that nobody in college had read anything like so much general literature and drama as young Hughes. It is to be said, however, that he never acquired the taste for literary drivel. But during the winter of 1907-8, while he was in one of his hardest fights with the Legislature over some of the problems, the solution of which marked his administration, he read six of the swashbuckling novels of Dumas.

: : : : : :

HE NEVER has understood, as workaday politicians understand, the ins-and-outs of local politics. A good part of his troubles with the Republican organization were due to this fact, and to the further fact that he came into political life without personal acquaintance with politicians, or even with the legitimate political customs of the day. But he realized his limitations in this regard, and never tried to learn the game of petty politics.

One of the shrewdest of the political writers who twice a day faced him in the Executive Chamber for the newspapers asked him once a searching question, founded upon the reasoning of those to whom politics is grist for the daily mill. The Governor looked at him grimly, inscrutably, and said:

"I have nothing to say for publication about that matter at present."

Then his lips began to twitch and his eyes to twinkle as he added:

"But for your own information, and so that you may not go astray about it, I will say that—I haven't the remotest idea what you are talking about!" And not a man in the group had the slightest doubt that what he said was true.

Time and again Hughes invaded the domain of some local leader, to make a speech at a fair, to visit a State institution, or what not; was his guest; was introduced by him to his constituents—and afterward exhibited undisguised astonishment, and full appreciation of the joke, when the newspaper men told him he had been sitting at the very fireside of a man who would cheerfully cut his political throat.

: : : : : :

WHEN he appointed the late Frederick C. Stevens, who had been chairman of the Gas Investigating Committee, to be Superintendent of Public Works, the political firmament shook to its foundations. The Wadsworths, father and son, feudal lords of Northwest New York since time out of mind, only the year before had legislated Stevens "off the map" by an act reapportioning the legislative districts of the State, at great expense of political manœuvring; had put him "out of business" beyond rescue by anything but a political miracle. Hughes, thinking only of his own confidence in the character and efficiency of Stevens, reached into the political morgue, so to speak, and rehabilitated him by appointment to the most important and powerful office within his gift.

The Governor was amazed, perhaps a trifle disconcerted, by the uproar which his action caused. The single instruction that he gave to Mr. Stevens, as the latter quoted it to me, was this:

"I want you to conduct this office with an eye solely to efficiency and the public interest. The one thing you must *not* do is to try by the use of patronage to build any 'Hughes machine.' "

IN THE first days of his term it chanced that he and former Governor David B. Hill rode together in a train. Those who heard the conversation say that it was "as good as a show" to hear these two discussing sundry acts and policies—this newcomer in the field and that battle-scarred veteran who had "been there" before him. Whole eras of party politics and dearly-bought experience were condensed in Hill's courteous but candid advice to the new Governor.

"I wouldn't do that," the eager hearers heard him say at one point. "I tried that, and you'll find it won't do." And at another: "Before you try to draft a ballot law, get the advice of the fellows who have worked at the polls."

: : : : : :

I NEVER shall forget the man's white, drawn face that day when he told us he could not interfere in the case of a boy condemned to die for murder. It was the first time the life of a human being had hung absolutely upon his personal decision. I know now that in that case, as in many a case afterward, he had fine-combed the record for some reason within the scope of his lawful powers, as he construed the law, which would justify him in saving that boy's life.

: : : : : :

THE man is a glutton for work. Some idea of his unbelievable appetite for hard personal labor may be gained from the fact that he taught under a fellowship from the Law School, had a private class besides, and during the days worked like a horse in the law office. Somewhere there is a diploma certifying that he crowded into these busy months a course in stenography, and acquired a speed of 150 words a minute.

: : : : : :

MANY things, true and untrue, friendly and unfriendly, have been said about Hughes since he became a public figure. With equanimity he has

borne alike praise and blame. But one thing that he knows is commonly thought and said of him cuts him to the quick. He does not understand it, and never has got used to it. That is, that he is a "human icicle" —a thinking machine; an austere person, slave of conviction and the letter of the law; an animated Puritan conscience, without sympathy or passions.

HUGHES AS A REPORTER OF NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

A Secret Life Ambition Laid Bare By the Offer of a Job.

[*Reprinted from The Evening Post, June 12, 1916.*]

AND yet, Charles E. Hughes need not have remained in judicial seclusion at Washington during the Republican National Convention. He had an opportunity—but the following genuine correspondence published here with his consent, speaks for itself:

May 18th, 1916.

Hon. Charles E. Hughes,
2100 Sixteenth Street,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Governor Hughes:

I observe in the Publick Prints that one William Jennings Bryan, sometime Secretary of State of the United States, is to report the Republican and Democratic National Conventions for a syndicate of newspapers. Would you accept a commission to report them for the *Evening Post?*

This proposal involves the opportunity for you to express yourself regarding various matters and persons with a candor not quite practicable in your judicial capacity; also, there seems a remote possibility that at one or both of these Conventions one thing or another might happen of interest to you.

Notwithstanding your lack of actual newspaper experience, I am sure your reports of and comments upon these gatherings would be readable. I believe I can guarantee you a position on the first page, next pure reading matter; we might even be able to syndicate your dispatches to our mutual advantage.

So far as I am aware, you never have attended a National Convention. Every American citizen ought to see one once. This is a grand chance for you to earn your travelling expenses both ways, and possibly a little to spare.

Anticipating with anxious interest your acceptance of this proposal, and with kindest personal regards, I am, as always,

Cordially, JOHN P. GAVIT,
Managing Editor.

Washington, D. C., May 19, 1916.

Dear Gavit:

I have received your letter of May eighteenth. I cannot tell you how deeply touched I am by your kind offer. At last my secret ambition is laid bare. For many weary years I have longed to be a newspaper correspondent and say a few things. But my talent for up-to-date, virile, philosophical, prophetical, cinematographical correspondence has been unrecognized, and one exigency after another has compelled me to make other arrangements. I am now under contract for work, relatively unimportant, which, however, will detain me here during the time the Convention is held. I put aside my longing to see a Convention; that is very great, but it is as nothing compared to my wish to write one up and to show the best of newspapers how it may be improved.

Faithfully,
CHARLES E. HUGHES.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

Fine schedule: 25 cents on first day overdue
50 cents on fourth day overdue
One dollar on seventh day overdue.

OCT 14 1947
OCT
15Nov'49 JG
17 Jul 54 PB
JUL 1 0 1954 LU
5 JAN'59 AM
REC'D LD
DEC - 6 1958

18Jul'62WA
REC'D LD
JUL 12 1962

LD 21-100m-12,'46(A2012s16)4120

Gaylord Bros.
Makers
Syracuse, N. Y.
PAT. JAN. 21, 1908

E664
H5G2

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

UNIVERSITY O
This bo